

REMARKS

Claims 15 and 27 have been amended for clarification purposes unrelated to patentability. Applicant reserves the right to pursue the original claims and other claims in this application and other applications. Claims 1-31 are pending in this application.

Claim 15 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. The Office Action contends that the preamble of the claim recites the intended purpose of the claim is a mail verification system, but the body of the claim fails to recite that the mail piece is actually verified. Applicants respectfully disagree. Note first that the preamble of the claim recites a method of operating a mail piece verification system, and not a method for verifying a mail piece. Furthermore, line 6 of claim 15 recites "performing a verification check on the mail piece data." The verification check on the mail piece data is the verification of the mail piece. As noted on page 2 of the Specification, lines 25-30, verification activity involves verifying the authenticity of the postal indicium on a mail piece to ensure that the postage amount shown in the postal indicium has been properly accounted for. Nevertheless, the preamble of claim 15 has been amended to avoid any further confusion. Applicants respectfully submit that all claims are in compliance with 35 U.S.C. § 112.

Claims 1-14 and 27-30 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Moore (U.S. Patent No. 5,917,925) in view of Racanelli (U.S. Patent No. 4,511,793) and further in view of Liechti et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,715,164). These rejections are respectfully traversed.

The present invention is directed to a mail piece verification system for processing a mail piece that includes an incoming mail processing center for receiving a mail piece and obtaining data from the mail piece. The mail piece data is uploaded to a data center that performs a verification check on the mail piece data and downloads instructions, based upon the verification check, to an outgoing mail processing center located downstream from the

incoming mail processing center. The outgoing mail processing center then uses the instructions, received from the data center, to process the mail piece.

In view of the above, claim 1 is directed to a mail piece verification system for processing mail pieces that comprises "an incoming mail processing center for receiving the mail piece and obtaining the mail piece data; an outgoing mail processing center located downstream in the path of travel from the incoming mail processing center; and a data center in operative communication with the incoming mail processing center and the outgoing mail processing center" wherein "the incoming mail processing center uploads the mail piece data to the data center; the data center performs a verification check on the mail piece data and downloads instructions based upon the verification check to the outgoing mail processing center; and the outgoing mail processing center uses the instructions to process the mail piece."

Moore is directed to a method for authenticating indicia marks to reduce the amount of counterfeit marks. The system generates a unique pattern comprising encoded input data that comprises a unique customer identifier and a unique postal service identifier. The unique pattern is applied to a mail piece as an indicia using an ink formulation comprising one or more chemical agents detectable when exposed to a visible or non-visible frequency range of light. The authentication process is completed by exposing the goods to light in the visible or non-visible frequency range thereby making the pattern detectable, scanning the detectable pattern on the mail piece, degenerating the pattern to retrieve the encoded input data, decoding the encoded data to retrieve the input data, and comparing the input data against all stored input data in a mass storage device to determine whether the indicia is authentic. (Col. 8, lines 1-24).

The scanning performed in the system of Moore is done utilizing a field reader that is a hand held device housed in a briefcase or the like. (Col. 24, lines 7-10). At any point within the mail system the indicia mark affixed to the mail piece can be read on site with the field reader. All information contained in the indicia mark is transmitted back to the appropriate host computer if the information pertains directly to the customer or is "customer specific," or transmitted back to the control computer 12 if the information pertains to the

postal service operation or the vendor's operation. (Col. 11, lines 8-17). The control computer 12 and the host computer 14 receive the data from the field reader, and interface with the encryption unit 15 where the message is decoded and converted to clear text. The control computer then searches the database to validate the indicia mark and any other postal service specific information. The host computer reads and validates any customer specific information. Once validated, both the control and the host computers send messages back to the field reader 18 which displays the decoded message and any other pertinent information pertaining to this specific indicia, i.e., place, time of marking, or destination. If the marked mail piece is counterfeit or has been received at the wrong point of final distribution, an invalid signal is transmitted and displayed on the field reader computer screen. (Col. 12, lines 25-43). The reader receives validation while the goods are under the custody and control of the reader operator. (Col. 13, lines 60-62).

Thus, in Moore, a postal clerk scans a mail piece, using a hand held reader device. Information from the mail piece is transmitted to a computer, where the information is validated. A message, including the information from the mail piece, is then returned to the reader device to display to the postal clerk. If the indicia is counterfeit, an invalid signal is displayed. Therefore, as noted by the Office Action, Moore discloses scanning mail throughout the mail processing system to detect counterfeit indicia (mail fraud). The system in Moore, however, discloses no more than that as described with respect to conventional verification systems on page 3 of the present Specification. Note that in Moore, the mail piece must be removed from the mail piece processing path by a postal clerk, scanned by the postal clerk using the hand held reader, and then remain with the postal clerk after it has been scanned while the data is transmitted to the control computer and host computer, the data is validated by the control computer and host computer, and a message from each computer is returned to the reader held by the postal clerk. The amount of time required to perform this operation would make it impossible to verify any more than a minimal amount of mail pieces currently processed by the postal service.

The present invention, in contrast, comprises an incoming mail processing center, which may employ one or more mail processing machines, and an outgoing mail processing center, which may employ one or more of the same mail processing machines, that is located

downstream in the path of travel from the incoming mail processing center. The incoming mail processing center obtains the mail piece data and uploads the mail piece data to the data center. The data center performs a verification check on the mail piece data and downloads instructions, based upon the verification check, to the outgoing mail processing center. The outgoing mail processing center uses the instructions received from the data center to process the mail piece. There is no disclosure, teaching or suggestion in Moore of an incoming mail processing center and an outgoing mail processing center, where the incoming mail processing center obtains the mail piece data and uploads the mail piece data to the data center, the data center performs a verification check on the mail piece data and downloads instructions, based upon the verification check, to the outgoing mail processing center, and the outgoing mail processing center uses the instructions received from the data center to process the mail piece.

Even if, for arguments sake, the hand held field reader of Moore was deemed to be analogous with an incoming mail processing center (which it clearly is not) to obtain the mail piece data, there is still no disclosure, teaching or suggestion in Moore of a data center that downloads instructions based on the verification check to an outgoing mail processing center, that then uses the instructions to process the mail piece.

The references to Racanelli and Liechti et al. do not cure the above deficiencies. Racanelli is directed to a postal metering machine that includes a readout station. Each department of a business is assigned an account number that is printed on the mailing envelopes or applied with a label. As the item being mailed is fed past the readout station, the department is identified and the postage is automatically charged to that department. (Col. 1, lines 47-60).

There is no disclosure, teaching or suggestion anywhere in Racanelli of a mail piece verification system for processing mail piece that comprises "an incoming mail processing center for receiving the mail piece and obtaining the mail piece data; an outgoing mail processing center located downstream in the path of travel from the incoming mail processing center; and a data center in operative communication with the incoming mail processing center and the outgoing mail processing center" wherein "the incoming mail processing center

uploads the mail piece data to the data center; the data center performs a verification check on the mail piece data and downloads instructions based upon the verification check to the outgoing mail processing center; and the outgoing mail processing center uses the instructions to process the mail piece” as is recited in claim 1.

Liechti et al. is directed to a communication system that includes a data center that communicates with a plurality of postage meters via telephone dial-up lines to conduct resetting transactions. The data center is controlled by a postal authority, and can be used for gathering statistical data from each postage meter including the number of mail items in different postal classes processed by the postage meter. The data center can also be utilized to set postage limit amounts, time limits and piece limits on a postage meter. When the imposed limit is reached, the postage meter is programmed to halt operation. (Col. 4, line 43 to Col. 5, line 10). Liechti et al. also describes a conventional technique to reset a postage meter with additional postage by telephone, thereby obviating the need to physically carry the postage meter to the postal authority for resetting. Specifically, the postage meter calls a computerized central facility (data center) for additional available postage. The central facility verifies the meter’s identity and ascertains the availability of funds in the user’s account. After the information is validated, the central facility debits the user’s account and supplies a combination code to the meter or to the user for the user to introduce into the meter. The meter then independently generates another combination code and compares it with the received code. If their relationship is correct, the meter is reset with the additional postage requested. (Col. 1, lines 12-31).

There is no disclosure, teaching or suggestion anywhere in Liechti et al. of a mail piece verification system for processing mail piece that comprises “an incoming mail processing center for receiving the mail piece and obtaining the mail piece data; an outgoing mail processing center located downstream in the path of travel from the incoming mail processing center; and a data center in operative communication with the incoming mail processing center and the outgoing mail processing center” wherein “the incoming mail processing center uploads the mail piece data to the data center; the data center performs a verification check on the mail piece data and downloads instructions based upon the

verification check to the outgoing mail processing center; and the outgoing mail processing center uses the instructions to process the mail piece” as is recited in claim 1.

There is no disclosure, teaching or suggestion anywhere in Moore, Racanelli, or Liechti et al., either alone or in any combination, of a mail piece verification system for processing mail piece that comprises “an incoming mail processing center for receiving the mail piece and obtaining the mail piece data; an outgoing mail processing center located downstream in the path of travel from the incoming mail processing center; and a data center in operative communication with the incoming mail processing center and the outgoing mail processing center” wherein “the incoming mail processing center uploads the mail piece data to the data center; the data center performs a verification check on the mail piece data and downloads instructions based upon the verification check to the outgoing mail processing center; and the outgoing mail processing center uses the instructions to process the mail piece” as is recited in claim 1.

For at least the above reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that claim 1 is allowable over the prior art of record. Claims 2-14, dependent upon claim 1, are allowable along with claim 1 and on their own merits.

Claim 27 includes limitations substantially similar to those of claim 1. For the same reasons claim 1 is allowable over the prior art of record, Applicants respectfully submit that claim 27 is allowable over the prior art of record. Claims 28-31, dependent upon claim 27, are allowable along with claim 27 and on their own merits.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, it is respectfully submitted that the claims of this case are in a condition for allowance and favorable action thereon is requested.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian A. Lemm", is written over a horizontal line.

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